

Father of three electrocuted at Devon biogas site as two companies ignored safety warnings

- Carl Parsons, 34, was killed and Luke Madavan was seriously injured when a cherry picker struck an 11,000-volt overhead powerline
- Two companies have been fined following the death of Carl Parsons and life-changing injuries to a colleague at a Devon biogas site.
- HSE investigation found that Willand O&M had been advised to relocate the overhead powerline nine months before the incident but failed to act

Two companies have been fined after an employee was killed and a colleague left with life-altering injuries when a cherrypicker collided with an overhead powerline.

Willand O&M Ltd and New Wave Marine Ltd were sentenced at Exeter Crown Court on 3 March 2026 following an incident on 1 June 2020 at the Willand Biogas site, Hide Market Road, Cullompton, in Devon. Carl Parsons, 34, was electrocuted and colleague Luke Madavan, AGE, was left with life-changing injuries

Described by his family as funny, loving, kind and a fantastic father, Carl Parsons was a loving husband, son, brother and uncle, well-loved by everyone who knew him. He left behind a wife and three children.

The court heard that New Wave Marine had been contracted by Willand O&M to lift the lid of a biodigester and stir a crust blockage that had accumulated inside the tank. During this work, a cherry picker operated by New Wave Marine struck an overhead powerline. The electrical current passed through the metal basket, fatally electrocuting Carl Parsons and causing a serious electric shock to Luke Madavan.

An HSE investigation found that Willand O&M had been advised by their principal contractor and Western Power Distribution to relocate the overhead powerline. Doing so would have eliminated the risk of contact during both the build and foreseeable future maintenance. Willand O&M failed to act on this advice and put no adequate control measures in place, such as height restrictors on cherry pickers or restricted work areas. Supervision, monitoring and site induction were also found to be poor.

New Wave Marine's risk assessment was found to be neither suitable nor sufficient. The company also lacked formal training provision and adequate supervision for the work being carried out.

HSE has guidance on [working safely near overhead electricity power lines](#) and recognised industry guidance is also available via [Look Out Look Up](#). The guidance advises to plan and manage work near electric overhead power lines

so that risks from accidental contact or close proximity to the lines are adequately controlled.

Willand O&M Ltd of Cleave Farm, Station Road, Willand, Cullompton, Devon, pleaded guilty to an offence under Regulation 3(1)(a) of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 by virtue of Regulation 14, having failed to ensure that persons carrying out work at the site were not working on or near a live conductor without reasonable and suitable precautions in place to prevent injury. The company was fined £51,000 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £28,467.

New Wave Marine Ltd pleaded guilty to offences under Regulation 3(1) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company was fined £30,000 with prosecution costs of £8,000.

HSE Inspector Nicole Buchanan said: “Working underneath overhead powerlines is inherently unsafe and these risks should be eliminated wherever possible. There is a risk that workers operating equipment could either make direct contact with the electrical source or be exposed to electricity arcing over several metres and travelling through the basket. The electricity network will provide guidance and assist in moving lines or burying them underground to prevent incidents. Companies should always seek competent health and safety advice and ensure their staff are adequately trained.

“The death of Mr Carl Parsons and the injuries to Mr Madavan were entirely avoidable and I hope that this case will serve as a lesson to others who try to avoid costs by working near overhead powerlines. I express my deepest sympathy to those who witnessed the incident, to Carl’s family, his wife, and especially to his three children, and to Mr Madavan; and I thank them for their cooperation throughout the investigation.”

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Alan Hughes, HSE advocate Sam Jones, and paralegal Helen Jacobs.

Further Information

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Relevant guidance can be found here [Overhead power lines – HSE](#)
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).